



KEYSTONE NEWS

Operation Iraqi Freedom



Theater Immersion Training begins

Camp Shelby, Miss – Train as you fight has become the battle cry of the Iron Soldiers from the 2/28th Brigade Combat Team (BCT).

“Every Soldier must be able to fight as an infantryman,” said Col John Gronski, commander for the 2/28th BCT. One of the basic skills that a Soldier masters at Mobilization Center Shelby is weapons familiarization.



Soldiers of the 1-110th INF BN bear-down on the M2-50 Caliber Machine Gun, during Crew Served Weapons Qualification (CSWQ).
Photo by Spc. Michael Williams

Some of the Army's most proficient weapons experts; many of them seasoned combat veterans, have been pooled at Mob center Shelby to provide the 2/28th BCT Soldiers, some of the finest weapons training in the Military. Prior to conducting live fire exercises, firearms techniques are taught to all Soldiers at the Primary Marksmanship Training Course (PMI). Individual Weapons qualification (IWQ) will be conducted on the M-16, 9-MM and the M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW). Designated Soldiers will also qualify with Crew Served Weapons (CSW) that consist of the 50 Caliber Machine Gun, the M240-B Machine Gun and the MK-19 Grenade Launcher. Once IWQ is

completed, Theater Immersion Training will become the focus for the 2/28th BCT.

Soldiers will face many challenges that have been adopted from the War in Iraq. The training lanes at Mob Center Shelby have been carefully developed to mirror a miniature Iraq. Mounted Combat Patrolling Lanes (MCPL), will be the initial test for all Soldiers as they begin to maneuver through the infant stages of Theater Immersion Training.

Interacting with a different culture will prove to be the first hurdle for many Soldiers. Situational Training Exercise (STX) takes place in villages where the scenarios are played out by many Iraqi Americans and individuals of Middle Eastern descent. Interacting with Civilians On the Battlefields (COBS), local police, merchants, unruly villagers and battling insurgents are just a few of the obstacles the Iron Soldiers will face. “The language and customs barriers are just a few of the initial stumbling blocks that we will face,” said SSG. Gonzalez, who is attached to HHC 2/28th BCT.



Staff Sgt. Jose Gonzalez Jr. a resident of Berks County, Pa, walks through the Village of Trebil, prior to conducting Situational Training Exercises. He is a member of HHC 2/28th BCT. Photo by Capt. Alfred A. Smith

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The ability to navigate a convoy through open terrain will challenge even the most experienced soldier. MCPL will put the Iron Soldiers through a series of battle-tested situations. Attacks by insurgents with Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG's), maneuvering around road blocks, facing Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's) and vehicle recovery are just some obstacles the Iron Soldiers will face.

"We incorporate the Crawl, Walk, Run technique to Theater Immersion Training," said Capt. Michael Green. Soldiers train in the Virtual Combat Convoy Trainer (VCCT) prior to moving out to the live fire convoy exercise. "The VCCT allows the soldier to physically see the mistakes made during a convoy movement and make the necessary corrections," said Green.

Soldiers of the 2/28th BCT are slowly moving out of the crawl stage and into the walk stage. With many more phases of Theater Immersion Training on the horizon, the Iron Soldiers can only anticipate the many challenges that will prepare them for Iraq.

By Capt. Alfred A. Smith – 2/28th BCT PAO
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Photo by Capt. Alfred A. Smith



2/28th BCT Soldiers, Driver Spc. Garrard Nemeth, Team Leader Master Sgt. Walter Gray and Gunner Sgt. Thomas Scanlon practice on the Virtual Combat Convoy Trainer (VCCT) as part of their Mounted Combat Patrolling Lanes (MCPL) training.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class. Rich Scariaciotoli



SpC. Kimberly A. Calvert –a resident of Montoursville, Pa, smiles as she takes a break from firing the M2-50 Caliber Machine Gun. She is a member of HHC 2/28th BCT.

Photo by Sgt. Smith 1-104th CAV



Soldiers of the 2/28th BCT walk thru one of the mock Iraqi villages during the initial commanders walk thru of Mob Center Shelby. Photo by Capt. Alfred A. Smith

**SAFETY CORNER**

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Joseph Witmer

I would like to take this moment to welcome the soldiers of the 2BCT to Camp Shelby. As a brief introduction, I am CW3 Joseph Witmer, the Brigade Safety Officer. My one and only responsibility to the 2 BCT and COL Gronski is the safety of ALL the soldiers assigned to the 2 BCT. The Brigade commander has stated that “WE WILL BRING EVERYONE HOME THAT WE TAKE IN COUNTRY.” Safety is one of his highest priorities. Col. Gronski’s policy of “Sweat more here and at NTC and bleed less there” are words to live by.

One of the key things I will do, as your safety officer, is to assist each soldier and commander in safety related training. The more we train to fight, the less accidents we can expect. There is NO excuse for us to lose a soldier due to an accident during the train up for this mission. Each unit will have a Safety Officer and Safety NCO to help reduce the accident rate. This safety TEAM is here for each of you. We will work hard to meet the commanders’ REQUIREMENT to bring EVERYONE home.

As our esteemed MSG Donley in the 2 BCT S4 shop would say “SAFETY IS NOT AN ACCIDENT.” I challenge each of you to work hard to keep your fellow soldiers safe. When it comes to the safety of our friends and fellow soldiers we are all obligated to stop unsafe activities.

I look forward to meeting all of you. Together we will complete our mission better than any deployment before us and set the standard for mission success, with the best safety record, for those that follow us.

“BE SAFE”



Chaplain (Maj.) Peter Lawson

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

At the conclusion of his inaugural address in January of 1961, John F. Kennedy said these often quoted words: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." These words speak to what it means to live in a democracy. Our forebears put forth a constitution, which emphasized freedom and liberty, and as citizens of this country we are called on to exercise that freedom in sacrificial ways. To live in a free country, doesn't mean people are free to do whatever they want, it means they are free to exercise their responsibility. Our forebears knew that this was the only way our nation could function properly and be successful, and for that reason, much was expected of its citizens.

Surely this "ask not" attitude must be the guiding force during this training period at Camp Shelby. As we spend long days and hours training for the Operation Iraqi Freedom mission, this is not the time to ask what the military can do for us, it is time to ask what we can do for the military. Our success depends on each individual giving of himself and herself individually for the greater good of all.

Many people have already given up a great deal to be at this place. Many have postponed college and civilian job opportunities, and all of us have left behind family and friends. Yet, as much as we have already sacrificed, the "ask not" must continue to guide and sustain us in the months ahead. If together we give of ourselves to each other, then together we will be successful.

Chaplain (MAJ) Peter Lawson,
Brigade Chaplain, 2BCT